

The Whistle

FREEDOM TO CARE
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WHISTLEBLOWERS EXPOSE FLINTSHIRE COUNCIL CORRUPTION

A long list of serious and corroborated allegations of malpractice within Flintshire Social Services and more widely in the County Council was provided by FtC whistleblower Chris Clode and others to a meeting with Maria Michaels, Social Services Inspectorate for Wales and other members of Welsh Inspectorate's Policy Unit on 24th May, 2000. Very little came of that meeting. (But see 'Council Whistleblower', p.5.)

Then in September last year, Chris wrote a strong letter to Michaels reminding her that she had promised to respond in "a couple of weeks". Months had passed by with no action, despite serious allegations of "sexual and physical abuse of children by County Council staff". "These allegations appear to have been barred from proper Child Protection Proceedings - including by intervention from the highest level within the Council", says the September letter.

Chris added: "the evidence of serious concerns appears to be receiving no better response from those empowered to deal with such matters, than the allegations raised by Alison Taylor in the 1980s did, before the Waterhouse Report." [For full coverage of the Report into child abuse in council care settings in North Wales see *The Whistle* No. 16, and article below]. Chris copied the letter to the Welsh Assembly, which is now beginning to take notice. In October Michaels replied with an admission that only "some" of the allegations had been investigated. Now more documentary evidence passed to Chris by an ex-Flintshire employee was handed to Wrexham police in December 2000.

WHITHER WATERHOUSE?

Meanwhile, Chris Clode and his supporters in FtC remain concerned about the question of how the Waterhouse recommendations are to be implemented. The Welsh Assembly's Health & Social Services Committee review of the implementation is contained in their guidance: "Working Together to Safeguard

Children". The Committee says that the guidance "stresses that clear procedures and support systems should be in place for dealing with expressions of concern by staff and carers about other staff or carers.

Organisations should have a code of conduct instructing staff on their duty to their employer and their professional obligation to raise legitimate concerns about the conduct of colleagues or managers. There should be a guarantee that procedures can be invoked in ways that do not prejudice the whistle-blower's own position and prospects.

New model codes of conduct for local government members and employees are being drafted under the Local Government Act 2000. A consultation exercise on the general principles is underway. The codes will be drafted and discussed by the ethics sub-group by early December. The code of conduct for employees will become part of their terms and conditions of employment. The Assembly has established that a few local authorities already include failure to report abuse as a disciplinary offence. Others are considering amendments to their procedures."

Chris Clode and FtC do not feel reassured by this. Chris wrote to the Welsh Assembly just after Christmas in these terms:

"While welcoming the paragraphs on whistleblowing in your Progress Report on implementing the 'Lost in Care' recommendations, we would like to make observations on the implications for the safe management of social care services within the wider context of Welsh local government.

As you know, most of the evidence we have placed before Members over the last 18 months has related to Flintshire, but we have also received evidence that other local authorities in Wales have also actively

suppressed concerns raised either by service users or by those advocating on their behalf; the response of Swansea to Bunny Pinnington [see next column] is an example of this elsewhere. As your Report on the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families says, "The Assembly believes that local authorities corporately have responsibility to address the needs of ... disadvantaged children...". I believe:

- Within Social Services Departments that would mean that the focus for change must not just be the front-line staff; the Care Council for Wales should have the power to regulate the whole "social care workforce", including managers at all levels, if that regulation is to work.
- In the strategy to recruit staff, the impact of unjust harassment by senior staff on the retention of experienced practitioners should be monitored by the Assembly; we have been told that all Flintshire employees who gave evidence to Waterhouse now no longer work there, following alleged harassment by the managers whom they criticised.
- It is to be hoped that the new climate of openness that the First Secretary advocates will be reflected in the wide dissemination of statistics on local authority performance (also on the Internet), including some of those Indicators - particularly on child protection - that have been removed from the Best Value list of Indicators.
- In addition to management qualification training, we believe that the Assembly itself has a responsibility to lead seminars for senior managers and councillors on protecting the ethics and value base for social care within a finite resource climate.

But, of course, our evidence to Waterhouse and, subsequently to you, has consistently shown that improperly dealt with abuse investigations are the product of a dangerous organisational culture, wider than just a Social Services Department. In my Waterhouse Statement, I included a document written to my manager in the first month of the new Flintshire Unitary Authority's life; I noted similarities between Flintshire and Lady Porter's Westminster Council, then under its own District Audit investigation: "Democracy needs checks and balances. They do not seem to exist in Flintshire or, at best, are thin and feeble, and the way decisions are taken down at our own DMT [Departmental Management Team] level reflect the arrogant dismissive attitude to due process (and its checks and balances) that comes from the top of the County."

Since this letter a damning Public Interest report on Flintshire has shown evidence of illegal payments and other malpractices as well as the suppression of evidence required by internal and district auditors. Although some opposition politicians in the Welsh Assembly are calling for an inquiry and resignations the W.A. Ministers have remained silent. (See page 5 for *Flintshire internal auditor whistleblowing and victimisation.*)

RESUSCITATION FOR WHOM?

Bunny Pinnington was the Nurse at a Swansea Special School for children with profound disabilities. She was given by her (non-medically-qualified) Head Teacher a Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) instruction on a child. She alleges this was done against the opinion of the child's consultant and without any consultation with the carers. Since then, she has been effectively driven from her job following her refusal to accept the Head Teacher's instruction.

Although, she initially had the support of the local Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Officer, David Wallace, her subsequent representation by him and by solicitors appointed by the RCN was the subject of complaint concerning their lack of specialist understanding, in particular on education law. Now, having given her advice that misled her to believe she had already exhausted possible internal procedures and therefore her employment was effectively terminated, the RCN is no longer supporting Bunny's case, despite a Court judgment in her favour. Bunny, meanwhile struggles on to pursue this important case of principle at her own expense.

The RCN made a joint statement on DNR with the BMA and the Resuscitation Council (UK) in June 1999; it seems that Mrs. Pinnington's case represents two clear breaches of this statement in that "responsibility for a DNR decision rests with the consultant or general practitioner in charge of the patient's care" (para. 3) and that "Relatives and others close to the patient should be assured that their views on what the patient would have wanted will be taken into account in decision making." (para. 9) The RCN said it had given Mrs. Pinnington "considerable financial and other support". That would only be sufficient were the RCN to pursue this critical issue of medical ethics to its end. We believe that there is a critical issue, especially for those medically qualified staff who work outside wholly medical settings and may have non-medical managers influencing medical decision-making and diagnosis.

FtC asked the RCN to clarify why it has ceased to support Bunny Pinnington and the pursuit of the critical principles of clinical authority and the right for close family consultation, especially given the disabilities of the child involved. On 20th January 2000 FtC also wrote to A.D. Lansdown, Pupil Support

Division, Welsh Assembly asking if FtC could submit evidence to an inquiry into the affair, which now seems possible. The WA has told FtC that it considers "that the lessons learned from experiences at [the school] should be fully applied and that they be similarly acted on across the whole of Wales. The Assembly have "decided to exercise powers to initiate an enquiry to examine these matters in depth." Meanwhile the RCN has told FtC that it intends to run an internal review into the representation offered to Bunny.

HOW GOOD ARE UNIONS AT HELPING WHISTLEBLOWERS?

Freedom to Care has received several letters from member **Eddie Nash** concerning his deep dissatisfaction over the absence of support given to him by his union Unison when he raised matters of public concern. FtC has in fact received letters and verbal comments from a number of members about the failures of a number of different unions to assist them (in some cases, allegedly collaborating with management in victimisation of whistleblowers). Indeed, if all unions were truly assisting workers and professionals of a high sense of social responsibility it is unlikely that FtC would have any work to do. FtC feels it is time to broach again this difficult matter. (See article 'Public Sector Unions & Whistleblowing' in *The Whistle*, No. 14, Sept. 1998, p. 2.) Here is a short section from Mr. Nash's letter of 4th December 2000:

"Given FtC newsletter details of other public servants in much the same position as myself as a result of disclosing malpractice and mal-administration I had suspected that other Unison members were also experiencing deprivation of the support to which they might feel reasonably entitled to expect...

The public service union Unison is the largest in the country. It sets itself up as a model of propriety and boasts of support for whistleblowers. In properly run branches, I am sure that is the case. The danger for members lies within the dysfunctional branches that will not hesitate to destroy, at any moment and under any pretext, the credibility of anyone daring to report them to Unison management."

FtC's message is: if you are raising a public concern do not simply assume your union will embrace your cause - it may be compromised by management. On the other hand, do not assume that it will not help you - you have to make the effort to find out how compromised they are.

"MULTI-TIES" - WHO BENEFITS?

Chris Thomas

The financial services industry will introduce so-called 'multi-ties' in June this year. This means that groups of companies will get together to be represented to the customers by the same advisers. This is being presented as a benefit to customers. In fact, it cuts overheads on training of advisers and will undermine the growing movement to *independent* and more accountable financial advice - which is what really benefits customers. Customers will not find it any easier to make a multi-tie rep. or any one of his companies responsible for the products sold, but may find it harder. In a multi-tie market there may also be greater scope for deception and misrepresentation. FtC supports independent and ethical advice from truly professional advisers; and openness and corporate responsibility from hugely wealthy and powerful financial service companies. (See our expose of *Colonial Mutual*, on our web site.)

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR N. IRELAND FARMERS

Letter from Lawrence Smyth

"As the Acting General Secretary of the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA) I have recently been fighting for democratic reforms in the organisation so that it properly represents the interests of 30,000 family farmers. In recent months we have succeeded in exposing political manipulation and the absence of accountability within NIAPA, and we now stand poised to focus on ways of ethically representing the plight of small farmers as they expect us to. Speaking up has not been easy, but it is certainly worth while." (Lawrence is also a director of FtC.)

FtC's 2000 AGM

FtC's AGM took place on 7th October 2000 at the National Institute of Social Work, London and was well attended by members from all over the UK. Geoff Hunt gave an address on 'The True Meaning of Whistleblowing' in which he emphasized how everyone who has a social conscience about their work has a "little bit of whistleblower in them". FtC's company secretary, Rob McGregor, gave an informative update on 'Recent Developments in Corporate Accountability' (see summary pp. 4-5 this issue.)

CorporateWatch

For news and views on the irresponsible and unethical behaviour of some corporations see the website at: www.corporatewatch.org.uk

PENSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY BREAKTHROUGH

FtC welcomes the ethical breakthrough represented by Regulations made pursuant to s. 35 (3) (f) **Pensions Act 1995**, requiring occupational pension trustees to disclose in their annual statements of investment principles: "the extent (if at all) to which **social, environmental or ethical considerations** are taken into account in the selection, retention and realization of investments and their [the trustees'] policy (if any) in relation to the exercise of the rights (including voting rights) attaching to investments."

Great importance has been attached to this by commentators who see it as a catalyst for positive social and environmental performance - especially when considered in conjunction with the availability to socially responsible investors of the shareholder engagement strategy (See Dr. Craig MacKenzie in the December 2000 issue of *Pensions World*).

THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY OF BUSINESS

Our Progress Report

Robert McGregor

There's no going back to the days when business knew best and we, the public, implicitly believed everything we were told. Beyond this one certainty, there's a blizzard of rhetoric, standards, initiatives, opinions and agendas (see **box**). Here are my impressions of developments.

'Accountability' is increasingly conspicuous by its **absence** from mainstream debate. The main terms are now 'corporate social responsibility', 'corporate citizenship', and 'corporate sustainability'. Not everyone is happy about this. Professor Jan Bebbington says of Eastern Group's Sustainability Report: "...at times the report talks about **business sustainability**. To my mind this inverts the focus of the sustainable development agenda. Sustainability's primary focus is on the sustaining of people and the environment - not business itself". A more recent example of this inversion can, arguably, be found in the Preface to 'Visions of Ethical Business', by Peter Smith, Senior Partner, PriceWaterhouseCoopers who refers to "...the long term sustainable development of a company...".

Some companies appear to regard 'accountability' and 'sustainability' as alternative strategic objectives. However, there is a strong argument for treating accountability as an essential prerequisite for sustainability. Simply put, sustainability is not, as some would have it, eco-efficiency; rather, it is an indivisible mix of environmental, social and economic components and "...without consultation and engagement with

stakeholders, there can be no common, enduring consensus about what sustainability means." Social accounting (the process whereby an organisation engages with its stakeholders to identify their issues of concern and then publishes an independently audited report of the effect of its activities on society), whilst practised in some recognizable form or another by a handful of 'leadership' companies, is likely to remain a minority activity for the foreseeable future. Social accounting is widely regarded as a **management** tool by those businesses that do practise it (i.e. a means to improve organisational decision-making and performance) rather than as a means to account to stakeholders. This has upset a number of academics who complain that the democratizing purpose of social accounting is in danger of being compromised.

There's a crucial difference between stakeholder accountability (treating stakeholders as constituents to whom a duty to account is owed) and stakeholder management (treating stakeholders as risk factors or as assets, to be managed for the benefit of the company). This difference is often glossed over.

Improved social performance (i.e. the amelioration of the negative impact on society of a company's core activities or the positive contribution which a company makes to society beyond the provision of its core activities) does not necessarily require the company to be accountable. Thus, conceivably, a company can 'do good' whilst, at the same time, keeping quiet about the nature and extent of its harmful impact on society and the environment.

FtC believes companies should account for the potential that they have, as powerful social actors, to play a decisive role in delivering environmental and social sustainability. To fully realize that potential, companies would have to empower their stakeholders to take on some of the responsibility for those business decisions which affect their lives.

Companies might in the future take on a public administration and/or policy making role regarding the provision of services to their local communities. Any such responsibility would have to be shared with local people and voluntary

groups. Social accounting would have a vital role to play in ensuring full accountability on the part of all decision-makers. In the UK, with its well established voluntary sector, government policy is now to devolve power to local communities for service provision. Regardless of possible corporate involvement, the question of accountability arises.

Increasingly, business is working 'in partnership' with government and civil society organisations to assist the wider community, (e.g. tackling social exclusion). Whilst these social partnerships are very welcome, it is possible that some companies may come to see such partnerships as a means to divert attention away from their core (i.e. profit-generating) activities. This might be an unlikely strategy for those companies which are liable, at any one time, to be under the spotlight of civil society, but what about the other 99.98%?

The ultimate performance indicator of corporate accountability would be the inclusion by institutional investors in their investment selection criteria of questions like: Does the company regularly publish independently audited social reports? Are those prepared in accordance with AA1000 and GRI? (see Box) Does the company's governance system support its social & ethical accounting, auditing & reporting processes?

COUNCIL WHISTLEBLOWER

Andy Sutton, internal audit manager for Flintshire County Council, sent letters to all councillors in May 2000 expressing concern about overpayment of early retirement cash to a social services worker and the purchase of a farm in Cheshire by the authority. He now says that for having blown the whistle he and a supporting colleague have now received veiled threats about their posts with the Council. Sickness levels in the internal department have been very high, and Mr Sutton has himself been off sick for weeks. The *Daily Post* (25-10-00) reports Mr Sutton as saying, there have been "significant delays on the part of senior management at Flintshire in resolving serious matters of concern that first arose in the summer of 1999, and an absence of effective reporting channels.." The Welsh Assembly is now involved, following the District Auditor's severe criticism of the Council.

Initiatives: The UN Global Compact – the Nine Principles; The Global Corporate Governance Forum (a partnership between the OECD and the World Bank); The OECD Principles of Corporate Governance, adopted May 1999; Business Impact Taskforce report, 'Winning with Integrity'; EC Social Policy Agenda (adopted June 2000); AccountAbility 1000 (AA1000), November 1999; Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), sustainability reporting guidelines (June 2000); The UK Pensions Act 1995; Socially Responsible Investment (www.socialinvest.org); The revised OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (June 2000); CACG Guidelines, Principles for Corporate Governance in the Commonwealth, November 1999; Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998; The Turnbull Report (September 1999), see, e.g. 'Turnbull, internal control and wider aspects of risk', AccountAbility (Tel. 0207 407 7370) and ACCA (Tel. 0207 396 5845); 'Corporate Killing' consultation paper (May 2000); The Sustainability Integrated Guidelines for Management Project (SIGMA); Shareholder activism - see 'Confronting companies using shareholder power: A handbook on socially-oriented shareholder activism'. Friends of the Earth; UK Company Law Review; 'Making a Corporate Commitment' Campaign;

Appointment (in UK) of Minister for Corporate Social Responsibility (4th May 2000); Taskforce 2002 research on potential for sustainable partnerships between business and voluntary organisations (1998); CSR Campaign 2000-2005; Business in the Community's Principles for Corporate Community Investment; Local Partnerships in Europe.

[See *FiC website* for the web addresses of these organisations.]

Freedom to Care says:

Accountability is the preparedness to explain (and justify) individual and corporate intentions, acts and omissions to relevant stakeholders at appropriate times, and the mechanisms by which this preparedness may be effected.

The accountability of large organisations is much too important to be left to secretive corporate executives and the martyrdom of individual 'whistleblowers'.

Isn't it now everybody's responsibility to try to bring about an organisational culture of openness?

FREE SPEECH IN EUROPEAN COMMISSION?

Following the case of Paul van Buitenen's whistleblowing on corruption in the EU a citizen's watchdog is to investigate whether the EC is denying its officials the right of free speech. The ombudsman, Jacob Söderman, is launching an inquiry into whether the EU executive's staffing policy infringes safeguards on freedom of expression enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights agreed at the Nice summit last year.

See Paul van Buitenen, *Blowing the Whistle: One man's fight against fraud in the European Commission*, Politico's, London, 2000 (ISBN 1902301463).

NEW ZEALANDERS CONTACT FtC

Following FtC's 1996 report on the unethical behaviour of the financial services company Colonial (then Colonial Mutual) it has recently been contacted (04-01-01) by a New Zealand couple who read the report on our web site. They were concerned about the six Colonial policies which they hold, and wondered whether they had been over-sold. FtC suggested they invite an ethical and independent adviser to review their policies. They later replied to FtC: "Many thanks for all your help. It's good to know there are people out there willing to help the little people."

REFORM OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT NOW

Before he got into power Tony Blair, and certain members of the present government, spoke publicly of the need to reform the Draconian UK Official Secrets Act. Instead they have invoked it to shut up embarrassing people. Former MI5 officer David Shayler spoke up about publicly unaccountable behaviour and is now standing trial on 23rd April 2001 under O.S.A. Part of his defence will be the Human Right to freedom of speech. Meanwhile, another attempt to use O.S.A. to gag an intelligence officer has failed. In November last year the CPS decided to drop charges against Nigel Wylde. He was accused of passing sensitive information to a journalist who published a book called *The Irish War*.

BSE SCIENTIST LAUNCHES WEB SITE

FtC has assisted former government scientist Dr. Harash Narang in setting up his own independent web site, in which he can make his unorthodox view on CJD/BSE known to the public. It is at:

<http://www.cjdfoundation.com>

FtC GUIDELINES IN DEMAND

Guidelines on creating a code of ethics, an ethics committee, an anti-bullying policy, a whistleblowing policy, and on the ethics of research are available free of charge on Freedom to Care's website (also available on paper, on request). A number of organisations have contacted FtC for copies. Most recently an H.M.Prison personnel department, and a London further education college have been sent copies on request. Students and researchers also ask for copies. All our guidelines carry the following warning:

No policy or procedure is a substitute for a workplace culture of trust and openness. However, a good policy or procedure may initiate or enhance such a culture if it is deployed judiciously. Used wrongly policies, procedures and committees may have the opposite effect to the one desired - most importantly, they may disempower by giving employees the impression that responsibility lies elsewhere and not with them. Policies may also be abused, distorted and neglected by managers who think that such policies apply to everyone except themselves. An ethics policy of any kind can also, unless the right conditions are provided, wrongly be used by an employee or other person to cover their incompetence, negligence or harassment of others. For example, it is not unknown for people who bully and gag staff to try to use an ethics procedure against the conscientious member of staff.

vCJD - THE HUMAN COST OF PUBLIC 'SERVICES' WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

The number of people killed by vCJD in UK is now approaching 100. The official £27m report into the BSE-CJD tragedy, which appeared at the end of last year, contains "only truly important message", says the *New Scientist* (04-11-00). "secrecy and paternalism make for bad government and bad science." The Inquiry Chair, Lord Phillips, said that the public should no longer be "sedated by the official presentation of risk." For FtC questions remain unanswered: 1) Is profit-motivated and inhumane mass food production sustainable? 2) Is the rigid bureaucratic attempt to manage complex accountabilities, without proper public participation, sustainable? 3) What part did and does deregulation play in this tragedy?

*Dr Harash Narang, the BSE/CJD whistleblower supported by FtC, has published a two page article in *Laboratory News* (Feb. 2001) explaining his viral theory of 'What Causes BSE?'*

GOVERNMENT TO GAG FREEDOM TO CARE & OTHERS?

The Health & Social Care Bill is currently going through the legislative process. Besides its sweeping changes to health and social care provisions it contains dangerously undemocratic elements. Most worrying is Clause 59. Here is a copy of a letter of concern that FtC has sent 12-02-01 to our patron in the House of Commons, Austin Mitchell MP (Lab.):

Dear Austin Mitchell

We are alarmed by Clause 59 of the Health & Social Care Bill. It appears to us to legislate for the gagging of groups such as Freedom to Care who wish to raise concerns about health and social services issues.

The Bill is having a reading in the House on 14th February 2001. Are you able to look into it and perhaps ask a question in the House?

It appears that the Clause outlaws critical independent reports on standards and treatment in the NHS, instead relying on official studies to monitor all aspects of the Service. If Freedom to Care were, for example, to produce an independent report it would be subject to a heavy fine (up to £5,000). In its nearly ten years of existence Freedom to Care has assisted many conscientious professionals victimized for raising matters of public concern and has done a service to good professionals and the public alike. Are we now to be silenced?

The Government will have control over the publication of reports into waiting times, doctors' workloads, conditions in hospitals and the quality of patient care. Already 5,000 patients die every year from hospital-contracted infections - will it now be against the law for independent groups to look into this and speak up about it? The BMA has already registered objections.

We look forward to your advice.

Best wishes

Geoffrey Hunt BSc MLitt PhD
National Coordinator

INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNALS & CHILD ABUSE

"Whistleblowing in the Professions" was the subject of a talk given by Chris Clode on behalf of FtC at the invitation of the Swansea Medico-Legal Society. Chris spoke on the strengths and weaknesses of the Public Interest Disclosure Act and then went on to outline the concerns about the continuing suppression of whistleblowers, especially in the public sector, where the most vulnerable are being left

unprotected from malpractice, despite the post-Nolan introduction of Whistleblowing Procedures.

One important issue raised in the discussion was the level of evidence required in Industrial Tribunal proceedings. While evidence should have to meet the civil law "balance of probabilities", this is apparently being undermined by Court judgments that are specifying that the more serious the act under the Court's (or Tribunal's) consideration, the higher the level of evidence will be needed to prove it. This is particularly worrying for those working to protect children, where the level of evidence required to believe a victim's allegation of abuse is "on the balance of probabilities", i.e., 51%. If allegedly abusive staff are then going to be able to challenge allegations in judicial settings where evidence of 60 or 70% or more is required, where that evidence level is creeping towards the criminal level of "beyond all reasonable doubt", will the child-victim then be disbelieved? Will the staff member - proven abusive in the Child Protection Investigation - then be believed in Tribunal/Court? Will that staff member then be allowed back to work with children? If this is the drift of the judicial process in such cases, whither Waterhouse and all the other investigations of institutional abuse currently being conducted across the U.K?

UNISON WHISTLEBLOWERS SACKED

Three UNISON shop stewards working in the Housing Benefits department at Newham, London who were suspended for whistleblowing in September last year have now been sacked. The three were suspended after contacting the press with suspicions that the private company running the department, CSL (a subsidiary of Deloitte Touche) had 'closed' around 6,000 unread benefit claims and appeals in order to improve its performance figures. They had also complained of 'Draconian' working conditions, staff cuts severely damaging the speed of claim processing and unreasonable target-setting. The three are now going to industrial tribunal. They can be contacted at: HBSupport, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE.

SOLDIERS BLOW WHISTLE ON URANIUM

Kevin Rudland, a British soldier who fought in the Balkans war has gone on TV (4-01-01) to show how the depleted uranium used in anti-tank shells has, he thinks, made him very sick. Six Italian soldiers, and other nationals, who fought in the Balkans have got, or died from, leukaemia. Following the usual denials from the M.O.D., the UK Government is reluctant looking into it.

COMEDIAN LAUGHS AT EURO-SECRECY

Political comedian Mark Thomas has brought some fun into the usually deadly serious business of whistleblowing on the high and mighty. His project on Channel 4 television revealed how a maze of procedures in the European Parliament stop us ordinary folk knowing about the financial interests of those who are supposed to be representing us, the MEPs. As a result of Mark's researches details of the MEP's declared interests have now been published on websites. If you have access to the Internet have a look at one of these two sites:

www.greenmeps.org.uk/mepsinterests/
www.mepsinterests.com

You may not be amused by everything you see there, but it is certainly a lot easier than what you would have had to do *before* Mark Thomas' initiative: take a trip to Brussels, look at a form filled in with handwriting in any one of 11 languages, and you would not be allowed to copy the records. 'You must be joking!' we hear you say. Jean Lambert, a member of the Parliament's Citizens' Freedoms Committee, an MEP who *does* understand their accountability says: "*Politicians are required to declare their financial interests so the public can know whether they are receiving financial benefits from outside bodies which might influence what they are saying in the Parliament.*" She hopes the Parliament will now decide to put the declarations on its official web site - where they belong.

THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT FLUORIDE?

Prof. Trevor Sheldon is the chair of the Advisory Group for the systematic review of the effects of water fluoridation (York Review). He is now speaking up about the way in which the review's findings are being misrepresented by the British Dental Association, the National Alliance for Equity in Dental Health, and the British Fluoridation Society. He emphasizes, among other things, that "*The review did not show water fluoridation to be safe. The quality of the research was too poor to establish with confidence whether or not there are potentially important adverse effects in addition to the high levels of fluorosis. The report recommended that more research was needed.*" Also, "*There was little evidence to show that water fluoridation has reduced social inequalities in dental health.*" For more information, and an anti-fluoride petition, go to:

www.petitiononline.com/4001k/petition.html
www.npwa.freeserve.co.uk

Freedom to Care promotes our right to accountable behaviour from large organisations, whether public or private; asserts that officials and private sector executives and managers have a duty to explain their intentions, actions and

omissions in so far as they significantly affect our quality of life; asserts that employees, professionals and all workers have a right to public-spirited freedom of speech in the workplace.

Accountability is for all of us, not just regulators:

The official bodies that we might expect to keep employers in order (such as industrial, commercial and professional regulators) do not always do the job. While some do make a difference others fail to maintain public accountability effectively. Who regulates the regulators? The answer is that WE ALL DO. Freedom to Care is trying to bring people together to play a part in create a culture of accountability - one in which everyone assumes that the weightier a person's role in society the greater their obligation to give an account of their acts and omissions. Freedom to Care does not have unreasonable expectations. It expects:

- regulators to do their job properly
- employees to be respected as 'citizens at work'
- the legal system to work in a fair and accessible way to protect and empower citizens

FtC's main ideas are in Geoff Hunt's *Whistleblowing in the Health Service, 1995* and *Whistleblowing in the Social Services, 1998*, both published by Arnold, London.

FREEDOM TO CARE

Freedom to Care is a non-profit & entirely voluntary organisation. We have pride in our independence. To keep ourselves free both of outside influence and inside compromises we have no office to maintain, no officers, no government grants, no corporate ties, no large bank account to defend, no charitable status, no consultancy income and we claim no expertise but our hard-earned experience. We are not lawyers. We are the UK's first whistleblower organisation, founded 1991. We are a company limited by guarantee (Reg. 2973440) to help keep us publicly accountable.

PATRONS are John Hendy QC, Allan Levy QC and Austin Mitchell MP.

FOUNDER is Geoffrey Hunt BSc MLitt PhD.

WHAT WE DO We lobby and campaign for greater public accountability of large organisations and for freedom of speech in the workplace.

STRUCTURE *Board of Directors:* Harold Hillman, Geoff Hunt, Tim Field, Lawrence Smyth, *Company Secretary:* Rob McGregor, *Network Coordinator:* Chris Clode, *Treasurer:* Chris Thomas, *Membership Sec:* Anne Burge, *Publicity:* Sue Baker.

WEB SITE <http://www.freedomtocare.org>

MEMBERSHIP £21 p.a. (£10 for those on low income), £35 group affiliation.

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